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Vermouth's Comeback: A New Era for the Forgotten Drink

The Global Rise of Vermouth: A Renaissance for the Aromatic Wine

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The Negroni is a popular cocktail of Italian origin prepared with equal parts gin, bitters and sweet red vermouth

Vermouth, a beverage often overshadowed in the world of drinks, is experiencing a renaissance that positions it as the perfect bridge between wine and cocktails. This fortified and aromatized wine has captivated the attention of experts and enthusiasts around the globe, who see in it a versatility that makes it ideal for both sipping on its own and mixing into cocktails.

Vermouth is steeped in history, blending wine with an infusion of herbs and spices, where wormwood, known as artemisia or absinthe, is a key ingredient. The name itself originates from the German term wermut, meaning wormwood. While its origins trace back to antiquity, with records of fortified and flavored wines from China to Greece, the modern version of vermouth began in the 18th century in Turin, Italy, thanks to Antonio Benedetto Carpano. His sweet vermouth, made with Moscato wine, was so popular that it marked the beginning of commercial production of this type of drink throughout the region.

Diverse Styles and Global Spread

Over time, vermouth has diversified into various categories. The primary ones are sweet and dry vermouth, though there are also variations like white, rosé, amber, and bitter versions such as chinato. Each style has its own character, from the robust and bitter Italian sweet vermouth to the softer and fruitier Spanish vermouth, often made with Sherry wines.

Today, vermouth production has transcended the traditional Italian and French borders and is now successfully crafted in countries such as Spain, the United States, Australia, and Japan. Each region brings its own local touch, incorporating indigenous botanicals and winemaking methods that reflect the area's terroir. In Spain, for instance, vermouths frequently utilize Sherry wines, giving them a unique and recognizable character. In Japan, vermouths are produced with a base of sake and local botanicals like yuzu, demonstrating vermouth's adaptability and evolution according to local traditions.

One of the reasons vermouth is gaining popularity is its ability to be enjoyed in a variety of ways. It can be sipped on its own, over ice with a slice of orange or lemon, or as the main ingredient in a wide range of cocktails. Classics like the Manhattan, Martini, or Negroni find in vermouth a perfect complement, enhancing their flavors and complexity. Even lesser-known cocktails like the Boulevardier or Adonis rely on vermouth for their balance and distinctive taste.

The quality of vermouth has improved remarkably in recent years, with producers striving to revive historical recipes or innovate with new combinations of botanicals and high-quality wines. This effort has resulted in vermouths that are not only excellent for mixing but also for enjoying solo. The key, according to experts, lies in selecting high-quality vermouths, storing them properly (preferably in the refrigerator once opened), and experimenting with different styles and proportions when mixing cocktails.

The Ritual of Vermouth Hour

The tradition of vermouth hour, especially in Spain, has contributed to the revitalization of this beverage. What used to be a weekend custom has turned into a daily practice, where friends and family gather to enjoy vermouth accompanied by tapas and good conversation. This ritual, which has endured through the centuries, is a testament to vermouth's power to bring people together.

In conclusion, vermouth is more than just a cocktail ingredient. It is a beverage rich in history, versatile in its use, and increasingly appreciated by both experts and newcomers. With a wide range of styles and flavors to explore, vermouth is poised to take a prominent place on bars around the world. Whether enjoyed on its own or in a carefully crafted cocktail, vermouth offers a taste experience that connects the best of the wine world with the creativity of mixology.